

Veterans Protected & Honored in 2002

Those who have served our country received long overdue recognition during the 2002 legislative session. I wouldn't let other lawmakers forget that veterans have sacrificed their own lives so that we can live in a democracy. If it weren't for the veterans who protected our country and our state, we wouldn't have the opportunity to debate anything here in Olympia. It has been an honor for me to be able to work on behalf of the veterans.

One of my priorities for 2002 was to **protect veterans from identity theft**. Just before session began, a number of local veterans groups came to me about veterans they knew who were becoming victims of this ever-growing crime.

I sponsored **HB 2453** which would exempt veterans' discharge papers (DD214) from the public record upon request of the veteran. It was signed into law March 28.

Legislation honoring veterans in Washington that became law this year include the following:

- SB 5097 which would require public entities to display the national league of families **POW/MIA flag** on certain holidays.
- SB 5626 which would modify the **definition of veteran** to include those that have served during peacetime, National Guard, reserve or Coast Guard members who have been called into duty by the president for 180 days or more, and those who served in the Philippine Armed Forces or Scouts in World War II.
- SB 6430 which grants a **high school diploma** to World War II veterans who were honorably discharged and left high school to serve.
- SB 6375 which conforms the Washington state **retirement** system to federal requirements on veterans.



Rep. Roger Bush discusses policy issues with a fellow member of the House of Representatives. If you would like Rep. Bush to attend your meeting, classroom or other community gathering to speak about the 2002 Legislature, transportation or budget issues, please call his Olympia office at (360) 786-7824.

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Representative **Roger Bush**

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2002 Legislature: Promises Kept & Promises Broken

Dear Friend,

I hope this letter finds you healthy and well. We have been through a tough few months and I am proud to say this country came through the tragedies we have faced – together. As I traveled through the area over the past six months, it was heartening to see the show of support for our country's brave soldiers and veterans. We owe them a great deal.

Our personal courage and strong leadership under President George W. Bush brought us through the horrific times. Yes, it has been difficult, stressful and tragic for those of us living so near military installations, but our country's leaders continue to rebuild our sense of security and freedom.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the state government. Coming into the 2002 session, lawmakers knew we were faced with a **multi-million dollar budget deficit and rising unemployment**. We had the opportunity to lead our state out of this deficit and into the future. We had the opportunity to join together as true leaders.

The opportunity was there to **rebuild the public's trust in its elected officials**, but this opportunity was squandered. Instead of cleaning up the mess, it was simply glossed over and left for next year.

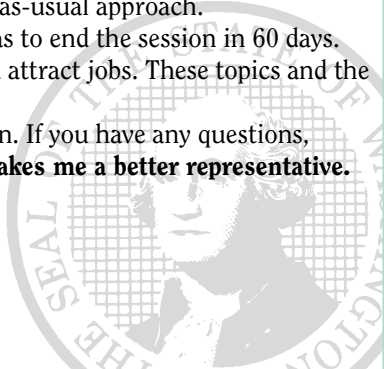
I had hoped the new Democrat majority and Gov. Gary Locke would allow open communication and embrace bipartisan ideas. **I had hoped for the opportunity to work together and change the way government does business**. Instead, Republicans were presented with the same business-as-usual approach.

Your family deserved our best effort, but the only effort made in 2002 was to end the session in 60 days. The state budget remains in trouble and government did little to protect and attract jobs. These topics and the transportation funding package are explained further inside.

I hope this information helps you understand what happened this session. If you have any questions, please call my office or send me a letter or e-mail. **Hearing your concerns makes me a better representative.** Thank you,

Roger Bush

Roger Bush
State Representative



Budget Relies on Gimmicks, then Gambles and Goes Nowhere

- Let’s look at some history:
- The national recession began in March 2001, with Washington’s economic slowdown starting in February 2001.
 - The state’s revenue forecast was lowered in both March and June 2001. The forecast reports pointed to the weakness in the state’s economy.
 - The Revenue Forecast Council took the forecast down \$101 million in September, before we knew the impacts of September 11.

Ignoring signals that the state spends beyond its means was how the state budget deficit grew to \$650 million in 2001. The terrorist attacks only worsened an already faltering economy. This session, Democrat budget writers drafted a new plan **that doubles deficit spending** to \$1.4 billion more than anticipated revenue. This budget was irresponsible and unsustainable in June of 2001 and **it’s even worse today**.

To fix this mess, the Democrats rely on a new lottery game and Enron-style accounting tricks. Against Republican objections, they approved spending nearly all of the state’s reserves and offered up a scheme to sell off future tobacco settlement payments in exchange for one-time cash. The up-front money will be used to pay operating expenses over the next 14 months, but **taxpayers will be paying off the debt for the next 30 years**.

Perhaps worst of all, the budget protects the state bureaucracy, while cutting spending for education, health care, public safety, and services for the truly needy. There is no serious effort to reduce the size of government.

The results, once again, are predictable. **By the Democrats’ own admission, this budget will leave taxpayers with a \$1 billion shortfall at the start of the next biennium** – if not causing the state to go completely in the red before the end of the year.

I could not support this injustice to the taxpayers of Washington.

What are others saying about the plan by the Democrats controlling the Legislature to sell off a portion of the state’s settlement with tobacco companies – money once earmarked to pay for health care services and anti-smoking efforts – for a one-time cash payment to fund state spending increases?

“too big a gamble for the state” – *News Tribune* editorial (3/6/02)

“not sustainable” – *Spokesman-Review* editorial (3/6/02)

“a disservice to our state’s taxpayers” – *Bremerton Sun* editorial (3/8/02)

“no real solution” – *Seattle Times* editorial (3/6/02)

“suspect budgeting” – *Yakima Herald-Republic* editorial (3/10/02)

“we’ll pay a high price for this gimmick” – *South County Journal* editorial (3/14/02)

“a bad deal for Washington taxpayers” – *Democrat Attorney General Christine Gregoire*

“terrible fiscal policy” – *Democrat State Treasurer Mike Murphy*

Transportation: Tax Plan on November Ballot

Voters will be given a chance in November to vote on a nearly \$8 billion state-wide transportation funding package.

- The statewide package includes:
- A 9-cent-per-gallon gas tax increase – 5 cents the first year and 4 cents one year after that.
 - A 1 percent increase in the sales tax on new and used vehicles.
 - A 30 percent increase on gross truck weight fees - 15 percent the first year and 15 percent one year later.

Statewide Package: No Accountability, only more Bureaucracy

The statewide package, House Bill 2969, does not guarantee the Department of Transportation will change the way it does business. The bill creates more bureaucracy, a Transportation Accountability Board, and gives more power to the renamed Legislative Transportation Accountability Committee. In recent comments, Gov. Gary Locke said: *“The two entities will work within the existing governance structure to ensure the best possible project delivery performance.”* If we are truly to serve the taxpayers, we must change this so-called ‘governance structure,’ not simply add another layer.

Regional Plan: Our money for Seattle projects

I believe, under the regional plan, Pierce County residents could end up paying for King County projects. It links King, Pierce and Snohomish counties into one taxing district. That’s a dangerous proposition when you look at population numbers. **Our voters are outnumbered, pure and simple.** I tried to amend the bill to make sure Pierce County voters had to approve the tax before they were forced to pay it. The Democrats wouldn’t accept this compromise. **This isn’t fair.**

As of this writing, I have been told the cross-base highway project has been deemed a “project of regional significance.” It will be the only local project on the priority list. I am encouraged this vital project has finally received state attention.

However, it’s unfortunate the Democrats turned down my attempts to enhance safety and reduce gridlock on State Routes 7 and 162, plus build Canyon Road between 192nd and 224th streets. Funding for the Yelm bypass was also part of my plan that Democrats turned down.

I voted against both of these plans.

Keeping Our Schools and Neighborhoods Safe

Protecting the families of Washington remains one of my top priorities. We must keep our schools and streets safe. This session, lawmakers took the important first steps to protect students and teachers, along with beginning the fight to stop the ever-growing problems of car theft, drug crime and eco-terrorism. I wish we could have done more, and I will continue to work in 2003 on these vital issues.

STAFF NOTIFICATION OF DANGEROUS STUDENTS: Establishing more protection for your children and school staff, school districts are now required to develop a plan that informs ALL school staff of potentially dangerous students. Through SB 6351 all school staff will have important information **to protect themselves and your children**.

EXPANDING THE DNA DATABASE: HB 2468 requires all convicted felons and those convicted of misdemeanor stalking, harassment and communication with a minor for immoral purposes to provide a DNA sample and pay a \$100 fee to have it entered into the statewide DNA database. **This will save money by solving crimes and preventing new crimes.**

BANK ROBBERY: Washington ranks 4th in the nation in the number of bank robberies each year. In 2002, we made bank robbery a class A felony and will send these criminals to jail for 31 to 41 months **on the first offense**.

ECO-TERROISM: HB 1938 increases the penalties for eco-terrorism by adding this crime of destruction to the list judges can consider when handing down jail time. In Washington, we have made a statement to these so-called environmental activist groups: **stop your terrorist tactics**.

CAR THEFT: A car theft bill did pass the Legislature, but it only increased the penalties for those involved in ‘chop shop’ operations. No additional penalties were added for adults who aren’t part of chop shops. Juveniles, who commit close to half of the 35,000 auto thefts in Washington each year, also face no additional penalties. **We need to fight this out-of-control crime.**

DRUG OFFENDERS: Drug offenders currently make up 21 percent of our prison population. The governor supported and signed a law **lowering sentences** for these criminals. However, the law did not specify the budget savings would go directly to treatment programs. If the Legislature were serious about **making neighborhoods and schoolyards safer**, it would identify drug addicts willing to commit to treatment and direct budget savings to local treatment programs.

Frontier Park/Pierce County Fairgrounds Update:

In 2001, I secured \$150,000 in funding for upgrades to our Pierce County Fairgrounds. Just recently, I took a tour of the facility and was pleased to see the numerous maintenance improvements the fairgrounds staff had accomplished with these dollars. The groundskeeper and his crew should be commended.

- Among other projects, they completed the following:
- Improved public access by adding gravel and asphalt to numerous pathways. Too much mud and dust had made travel on these paths very difficult for strollers and wheelchairs.
 - Began removal of the telephone polls and ‘spaghetti’ wire throughout the park. Soon, all wiring will be underground. This will greatly enhance the beauty of the park, and allow us to upgrade the safety communication equipment.



Speedy Trial Rules Revisited:

With the establishment of the Time For Trial Task Force, the Washington State Supreme Court will revisit our state’s speedy trial rules. **It is my honor to serve with this group of Supreme Court justices, legal scholars, and attorneys.** We will work to **balance** the rights of our citizens through the justice system.

The task force was formed to protect all of us from criminals like Bruce Eric Smith, who had a life sentence overturned because an appeals court agreed that his right to a speedy trial was violated. Smith was released in August 2001 and earlier this year raped a Parkland woman and killed a young Tacoma man while fleeing police.